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THE LIFE AND WORKS OF EDVARD GRIEG

by

Leah E. Kennedy

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree**

of

DEPARTMENTAL HONORS

in

**Vocal Performance
in the Department of Music**

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgments.....	3
Abstract.....	4
The Life and Works of Edvard Grieg- Script for Lecture Recital Presentation.....	5
References and Works Cited.....	19
Powerpoint Presentation for Lecture Recital.....	20
Author's	
Biography.....	27

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Abstract

Composer Edvard Grieg merged a Classical and Romantic style of music with traditional Norwegian characteristics to create his own unique, complex style that is still widely performed today. His music changed the way we think of Romantic music and foreshadowed 20th century styles that would emerge only a few years later. His compositions vary throughout his life based on other composers' innovations and his own preferences, but how much did Grieg's personal life affect his music? And how did his life events shape his emerging style during his career? This information is displayed in a lecture recital format and will outline some of the historical implications and personality traits that allow us to understand the context of Grieg's music and how he bridged the gap between trying to please audiences and satisfy himself.

The Life and Works of Edvard Grieg: A Lecture Recital
April 18, 2011, FAC 214

Leah Kennedy, soprano
Bryan Daurelle, piano

My name is Leah Kennedy. The title of my thesis is “The Life and Works of Edvard Grieg,” as illustrated through his song repertoire. For the past year and a half I have been conducting in-depth research on the composer Edvard Grieg. My research began with his compositional style, but very soon I realized that his personal life directly influenced his musical works. Changes in his musical style were inspired by his relationships with various composers, poets, and musicians. Through my research I have come to love Grieg’s songs and relate personally with many of his ideals. Performers can benefit not only from an in-depth study of the works they are to perform, but also from learning about and relating to the individual experiences of the composer and poet. Knowing a fuller background of Grieg’s pieces has certainly increased my understanding of his music. I have chosen to perform a lecture recital in order to share this information with you.

My sources include Grieg’s personal diaries, articles, speeches, and letters written to colleagues and friends. My sources also include letters written about him by other composers, analytical documents of his works, and first-hand biographical accounts of his life.

Edvard Hagerup Grieg was born June 15, 1843 in Bergen, Norway, and died September 4, 1907. He was the leading composer in Norway, and in much of Europe, during his lifetime. His influence reaches throughout the entire world, with societies in Tokyo, New York City, Boston, Rio de Janeiro, Paris, Oslo, London, Moscow, and places in Mexico. Many musicologists have come to consider him a national composer whose works represent the essence of Norwegian music, much like Aaron Copland in the United States. Grieg’s music at

the end of the 19th century changed the way we think of Romantic music and was already moving toward 20th Century styles that would emerge only a few years later.

Grieg discovered his love for music at a very young age. In an article entitled, “My First Success,” Grieg recounts the following:

“Why not begin by remembering the strangely mystical satisfaction of stretching my arms over the piano keyboard and bringing forth—not a melody. Far from it! No, it had to be a harmony. First a third, then a triad, then a seventh chord. And finally, both hands helping—O joy!—a ninth chord, with five tones. When I had discovered this, my rapture knew no bounds. That was a success! No later success has been able to enrapture me like this. At that time I was about five years old.

“One year later my mother began giving me piano lessons. Little did I suspect that already here disappointments were lurking. Only too soon I realized that I didn’t enjoy practicing what I was supposed to practice. And mother was strict, unrelentingly strict. Although it may indeed have gladdened her mother-heart that I sat there experimenting with this and that, because it provided evidence of a musical nature, she certainly gave no outward sign of this. Quite the opposite. She was not to be trifled with when I idled the time away in piano reveries instead of concentrating on my assignment. And then, when I had to work on my scales and exercises and all that other technical devilry that gave my childish yearning stones for bread, it sometimes happened that she still guided me, even when she was not in the same room. One day she shouted menacingly from the kitchen, where at that moment she was busy preparing dinner: ‘But shame on you, Edvard: F sharp, F sharp, not F!’ I was deeply impressed with her superiority. If in those years I had been more diligent and had followed more willingly her loving but strict guidance, I would have escaped many unpleasanties later in life. But my unpardonable tendency to dreaming was already beginning at that time to create for me the same difficulties that were to follow me far into the future. Had I not inherited my mother’s irrepressible energy in addition to her musical talent, I would certainly never have progressed from dream to deed in any sphere of my life (Qtd in *Grieg’s Diaries, Articles, and Speeches*).”

Edvard’s mother, Gesine Grieg, was known as the best piano teacher in Norway, and her son was very privileged to study with her. His habit of experimenting at the piano never changed, and Grieg found himself adding chromaticism to his part-writing exercises at Leipzig Conservatory because he found them exhaustingly boring. We can hear these traits of chromaticism and love for unconventional harmonies in almost all of his songs, both early and late in his compositional career. Particularly of note is his common use of the augmented 6th chord in his melodies and his ability to make melodies sound atonal while staying within the bounds of a given key.

Young Edvard struggled through almost every subject in his early schooling, except music, and progressed through our equivalent of grade school with great fortune. He was never studious. Often he tried finding shortcuts in his work. When working on a math assignment, the first student to solve the problems was to receive special recognition. Grieg recounts the following experience:

“My ambition was immediately aroused. ‘Aha!’ I thought. ‘Now I must be smart.’ And I hit upon a brilliant idea in order to get finished as quickly as possible: to omit from the calculation all zeros, which to my childish understanding were of no value! I note: this was a success with a question mark—or, more correctly, it was a total fiasco. But it taught me a lesson. Since then I have learned to include the zeros in the calculation—whether it concerns numbers or—people! And what I learned, when all is said and done, proved to be a personal success.” (Grieg, Edvard. “My First Success.” Qtd in *Grieg’s Diaries, Articles and Speeches*)

This lesson resulted in a more thorough approach as a mature composer, especially in harmonic development and recurring melodic themes. This was also apparent in his attention to detail in rehearsals, especially on tours throughout Europe later in his life.

Most of Grieg’s passing marks in school were the result of being in the right place at the right time. Once when Grieg was ill for a time, his father required him to study the life of King Louis XIV in depth. The day Grieg returned to school, he faced an extensive history test for which the teacher would open the history book, point to something, and test the students on that specific material. Grieg’s subject happened to be Louis XIV. To everyone’s amazement, Grieg gave a full history of the king. Although he did not receive the highest marks because of his previous performance in class, young Edvard was satisfied with his score nonetheless.

The young student was also very clever in matters of truancy. Grieg recounts living a mile or so from his school. As a rule, students had to wait at the door to be admitted when they were late and were not admitted wet on rainy days. On several occasions, the six or seven year-old Grieg stood underneath a rain gutter on his way to school, subsequently arriving both late

and wet. His teacher would send him home to change his clothes, and by the time the ordeal had passed, he would have missed a half-day of school. Since he did this on many days of light drizzling, eventually his teacher sent someone to spy on him and discovered his devious behavior. We can only conclude that impish students must exist in every generation.

Soon Grieg began showing great aptitude in composition and wrote his first work at the age of 12. His schoolmates ridiculed him continually for “trying to compose.” Were it not for the encouragement of both a young lieutenant and a famous Norwegian violinist known as Ole Bull, Grieg never would have continued. One day while visiting the Grieg home, Ole Bull heard one of young Edvard’s simple songs and declared that the boy was to go to Leipzig, Germany, to become a great musician. He saw potential in the boy and his imaginative melodies. Grieg was 15 years old at the time.

The young Edvard intended to become a clergyman. As a child, he would stand on furniture and recite scripture, pretending to preach to large audiences who revered him. As he began composing, he quickly resolved to become a musician. Because he was the fourth of five children and not the oldest male, Grieg did not have the responsibility of taking over the family business and was allowed to pursue his own interests. His brother John, a very proficient cellist, took over his father’s business in keeping with national tradition.

Grieg spent the next four years at the Leipzig Conservatory, founded by Mendelssohn in 1843, the same year Grieg was born. There, Grieg studied with the world’s foremost teachers, including Plaidy, Wenzel, Moscheles, Richter, Papperitz, Hauptmann (who taught in J.S. Bach’s 18th Century home) and Reinecke. Each challenged him in a different way.

From Louis Plaidy, Grieg learned the value of hard work that takes no shortcuts. Grieg soon chose to work with Ernst Ferdinand Wenzel, a personal friend of Robert Schumann, from

whom he learned to appreciate the art of interpretation. Wenzel was his favorite teacher. Later, Ignaz Moscheles dispelled all idleness from his practicing. From Richter, Grieg learned the value of rules in music. Once he mastered these rules, he could break them and understand why he was doing so. Reinecke, the director of Gewandthaus concerts, inspired Grieg to “forget about the can’t and just do it.” Under Reinecke’s mentorship he was also forced to explore various forms by composing a string quartet, an overture, and longer works. Initially, Grieg struggled with these and sought the influence of composers like Schumann, Mozart, Beethoven, and Mendelssohn. Instead of mirroring the style of other composers, Grieg eventually developed his own style. However, as Richter taught him, this could only be accomplished when Grieg had mastered the rules (Grieg. “My First Success” qtd in *Grieg’s Articles, Diaries, and Speeches*).

As we study the harmonic progressions of Grieg’s music, we find that each section has a distinct goal, a climax, and a return to tonality. The chordal structure can be understood by a skilled analyst, even if it is not readily discernable to a listener. This is part of the genius in Grieg’s compositions.

Before graduation from the Leipzig Conservatory, he performed his own compositions at the Gewandthaus. This great honor was the debut of his *Four Piano Pieces*, subsequently published as Opus 1. A year later, he spent significant time in Copenhagen, Denmark, where he had a close association with painters, poets, and other musicians who were well-known throughout Europe. Copenhagen had become an artistic capitol in Europe, so Grieg was exposed to recent styles and ideas that were popular in surrounding countries.

In Copenhagen, Grieg fell in love with the woman who would become his wife—his cousin, Nina Hagerup. Nina’s parents did not approve of the engagement and complained that Grieg’s chosen occupation could not offer their daughter a secure life. Nina’s mother strongly

opposed the engagement saying, “He is nothing and he has nothing and he writes music that nobody wants to hear.” The couple waited for an entire year before Nina’s parents would permit the engagement to be announced publically. A three-year engagement led to a small but beautiful wedding in 1867. Neither set of parents were in attendance at the ceremony or following festivities (Benestad 7)

During their engagement, Grieg wrote about Nina in his diary almost every day and wrote letters to her almost as often. In his 1865 diary, he writes:

“Oh, my Nina! If you knew with what tenderness my thoughts here dwell on you, with what endless longing I here think of you! Before I fathomed you and all your love, it was as if I did not dare aspire toward the heights...It is because of you, my beloved, that with confidence and clarity I dare cast a glance toward the infinite. It is as if you, my good angel, hovered beside me as my thoughts wander through the vastness of space—as if through your intercession I received the power to break the magnetic chain that binds me to the dust! May God shed His peace upon you if you are suffering during these days—you who are my treasure, the light of my life!” (Grieg Diary of 1865, qtd in *Grieg’s Diaries, Articles, and Speeches* 7)

His descriptions are beautiful, even in their translations from the original Bokmål.

“Jeg elsker dig” (more commonly known as “Ich liebe dich,” or “I love you,”) is one of Grieg’s most popular songs and is believed to have been an engagement gift to Nina, who was herself a talented soprano. She sang every one of his songs, and Grieg called her the “only true interpreter of... [his] songs (Grieg Diary of 1905).” This song is in every way “Romantic”—both in compositional style and in mood. Listen for Grieg’s well-developed harmonic structures and chromaticism.

[Sing: “Jeg elsker dig”]

It was during this time in Copenhagen that Grieg met Henrik Ibsen, a valuable friend and noted poet. Grieg favored setting the works of this poet because of their descriptive and imaginative qualities.

Soon after their marriage, Grieg and Nina were anxious to start a large family. Their first daughter, Alexandra, was born in 1868. Sadly, she died of meningitis at the age of thirteen months. Grieg wrote this next song directly following her death as an expression of grief. You will notice that it uses characteristics of the Lydian mode; the fourth tone in the scale is always lowered. I believe this gives the song a sense of despair because it expands the minor mode. The song is called, “Hun er saa vid”, or “She is so White”. The word “White” refers to both the innocence and purity of his beloved child and her white pallor from death.

[Sing: “Hun er saa vid”]

The poetry (by Hans Christian Andersen) in this song is clever. The first stanza of the poem makes no reference to the fact that Grieg’s child has died. The composer was meticulous in choosing his poetry, and often complained that foreign translations were incongruous with his musical settings, and therefore, his music did not make sense with the words. Translations destroyed the artistic balance and text-painting of the original composition. Grieg writes:

“If a Scandinavian poet, whose language the foreigner neither sings nor understands, is garbled in translations, not only he but also the composer suffers. Unfortunately I have often had bad luck in my attempts to get good translations...the result, even in favorable circumstances, is usually that the translations are made to fit the music and seem unnatural ” (Edvard Grieg Museum et. al.)

Translations of his songs could not be easily avoided as Grieg’s publishers lived in Germany and because German was a more accessible language than Bokmål or Danish. In his later diaries, Grieg expresses great joy over having heard his music in its original language from time to time. In order to stay true to the composer’s artistry, all the songs you hear tonight are sung in their original languages.

These next songs beautifully illustrate Grieg’s relationship with nature and the way he reflected nature in his songs through text-painting, as previously discussed. He uses symbols such as birds chirping in musical trills and other embellishments, heart beats in the bass lines,

and the wind in sweeping melodic lines. Every note or pattern has a specific purpose in the song. Such compositional traits reflect characteristics of Schubert's "Gretchen am sprinrade" or Schumann's *Dichterliebe*.

Grieg had a deep love for nature and found inspiration which he often recorded in his diaries. On one occasion by the sea, he relates a pivotal realization he had about composing:

"How aptly Hans Christian Andersen has captured a mood like the one that enveloped nature in that moment when he wrote: 'For roar on, seething ocean, your giant breakers raise; the tempest, you and I my God will praise!'

"I was filled with the greatness and truth of these words. But I could not neglect also searching in my art for a way to express the wild music in the roar of the sea. Alas, my search was in vain. I sensed the utter impossibility of expressing these mighty sounds in musical form. There was in this rushing and roaring something so boundless that it struck me as presumptuous to consider even for a moment the idea of trying to reproduce it.

"But here, too, I found consolation: The artist's task is not to reproduce the physical event itself, but rather to create a reflection of the feelings awakened by that event; if this is done with brilliance, the impression is equally divine despite the absence of those overpowering effects that belong to nature alone" (Grieg Diary of 1865, qtd in *Grieg Diaries, Articles, and Speeches* 13)

Grieg accomplishes this, especially in these next songs: "God Morgen" (Good Morning), "Jeg giver mit Digt til Våren" (I Give My Heart to the Spring), and "Tak for dit Råd" (Say What You Will). All three are compositions that emphasize the wonder and joy of nature in relation to the human spirit.

[Sing: "God Morgen," "Jeg giver mit Digt til Våren" and "Tak for dit Råd"]

In these next two songs, we revisit the subject of death.

The text of "En Svane" (A Swan) refers to a silent swan who only sings at the moment of its death. The poet feels cheated because he never hears the swan's beautiful song, but realizes that the serenity of the swan is what makes it so mysterious and enchanting. Grieg beautifully illustrates the swan's stillness in the mood of this song.

[Sing: "En Svane"]

In spite of the loss of their first child, Edvard and Nina remained eager to raise a family. Unfortunately, the next pregnancy resulted in a miscarriage. The couple was devastated and struggled with the realization that they were not to have a large family. In addition, Grieg lost both of his parents to death and suffered a long period of depression. There are very few compositions or written records from this time, and Grieg left his wife in order to be alone. A few months later, the two were reunited through a good friend and remained happily together for the rest of their lives, although never reconciling with the absence of a family.

This next song, “Modersorg” or “Mother’s Sorrow,” was inspired by the couple’s family experiences. Grieg states in his journals: “Nina has been the only true interpreter of my songs...My songs came to life naturally and through a necessity like that of a natural law, and all of them were written for her.” Because Nina sang all of her husband’s songs, each composition became an outlet of emotional expression for her as much as for the composer himself. This is one such example.

[sing: “Modersorg”]

As Grieg’s popularity rose, he often struggled to find quiet places to compose. He resolved to rid himself of all things city-related and to find a quiet place where he could fully devote himself to his art. In 1877, he found that place in Hardanger about five miles from the town Børve, Norway. Grieg arranged to have a hut built some distance from any other structure, and soon it was called, “Komposten,” a play on words meaning both, “the composer’s hut” and “the compost heap.” Grieg often locked himself in his hut for hours while he painstakingly wrote melody after melody during the winter months. When Grieg left his hut, he would leave following note on his desk in case of intruders: “If anyone should break in here, please leave the musical scores, since they have no value to anyone except Edvard Grieg.” Here he also

acquainted himself with Nynorsk, an emerging dialect of Norwegian language that sought to purge any Danish influence.

Norway, at the time, was in the process of great change, having received independence from Denmark and just decades earlier. The country was still bent on developing its own identity in all areas. Grieg aided in this process through his music, and much of his inspiration came in his little hut.

Grieg always had a strong belief in God and His omnipotence. In 1888 upon a visit to Liverpool, he found that his beliefs related most closely to Unitarianism, and he associated himself with the group. However, characteristics of his relationship with God are manifest in his songs throughout his entire career. One year before his move away from Christiana (now Oslo), Grieg again collaborated with Henrik Ibsen to complete the *Peer Gynt Suite*, which is now one of his best-known works. This next song comes from that collection. It is about a girl who sings for her love as he leaves on a journey. She has no knowledge of when, or if, he will return. The song is about waiting, her hope in reuniting, and her belief that if they do not see each other again in this life, at least they will in the next. Grieg believed in one God, an afterlife, and that man can be divinely directed. This song is more complex than his previous songs in that the mood changes so often. However, as previously stated, it has everything to do with his interpretation of Ibsen's poetry.

[Sing: "Solveigs Sang"]

Although a light-hearted and carefree fellow, Grieg was critical of other musicians and composers. In his diaries, he often writes about pieces he has just heard for the first time. One of Liszt's pieces he said was, "sad proof of the decline of newer German music," because it was not true to the development of every musical idea. Grieg writes:

“All too soon it became evident that he was not capable of mastering his thoughts--indeed, that he was rather the slave of those thoughts, that he is devoid of style, that he soars for only a moment only to sink all the deeper in the next....then comes an entirely Italian phrase, after that a completely trivial sequence that is not even deftly placed in the context, then another moment where Liszt is indescribably great—that is to say, one only glimpses his greatness, not more; for one is immediately disabused of the illusion, either by some banality or other or by something boring or Baroque”(Grieg Diary of 1866, qtd. in *Grieg's Diaries, Articles and Speeches* 25).

Later, Grieg played some of his compositions for Liszt, and his opinion drastically changed. He called him “unmatched in the sphere of art,” and although Liszt was somewhat surprised at the natural element in Grieg’s music, he enthusiastically supported him. In that meeting, Liszt sight-read Grieg’s *Piano Concerto in A Minor*, op. 16 and said, “Hold to your course. Let me tell you, you have a talent for it, and—don’t get scared off!” It is said that Grieg took this encouragement to heart and treated it as a “sacred mandate” (Hughes et. Al.). Grieg continues writing about the current state of German music by saying:

“This much is clear, that if we do not fight with all our might against this genre [‘newer German music’], the outlook for music in our time is very bad. It is almost as false as the vulgar Italian school—yes, perhaps even more dangerous—because it ventures into an area that is of interest to musicians, namely philosophy. But if true art—consisting in pure immediacy and sparkling poetry—is to progress, then philosophy must be abandoned, and the sooner the better in my opinion” (Grieg Diary of 1866, qtd. in *Grieg's Diaries, Articles and Speeches* 25).

Grieg had no patience for Italians, and especially the three bel canto composers. It is his opinion that Donizetti “is the worst and most uninspired of them all” and Bellini is “entirely boring” with too many embellishments and notes that do not mean anything (Diary of 1866 quoted in *Grieg's Diaries, Articles and Speeches* pg. 28). However, Grieg adored the music of Mozart, Beethoven, Schumann, and Wagner. The opera *Tannhäuser* is one of Grieg’s favorite works.

It is sometimes stated by the academic community that Grieg was a miniaturist, that he never wrote long works. To some extent, this may be true. However, Grieg has proven that he can write long works in his *Concerto in A Minor*, opus 16. This is the very piece Liszt sight-read,

which is incredible considering the complexity and quick movement. Brian will perform only excerpts from the concerto to give you a good foundation of the piece. Again, listen for an atonal feel while still in A minor, complex harmonic relationships, thorough development of his themes, and relations of each idea throughout the piece. This is one of Grieg's very few longer works, but his theme development is very strong. Here is *Concerto in A Minor*, Opus 16.

[Brian perform: Excerpts from *Concerto in A Minor*]

Grieg is associated with Nationalist music in Norway and was once called, “the most national among the national composers, the true Messiah of Norwegian music” (Grieg, “A Cosmopolitan Credo,” quoted in *Grieg's Diaries, Articles, and Speeches* pg. 96). That was not the composer's intention as he composed, and often the composer openly resisted such titles by writing to newspapers and published journals. “A Cosmopolitan Credo” is an excellent example. In his later career he sought to develop his individual style by the ideas of the cosmopolitan movement. Many nationalist radicals in the country resented his incorporation of other-European ideas. However, Grieg found inspiration in his country's folk songs and willingly admits in a letter that he could never bring himself to “violently tear up the roots that tied him to his native land” (“A Cosmopolitan Credo”). Grieg writes:

“I was educated in the German school I studied in Leipzig, and musically speaking I am completely German. But then I went to Copenhagen and it...struck me that I could develop myself further only on a national foundation. It was our Norwegian folk tunes that showed me the way. In Germany, the critics treated me badly because I didn't fit into the categories into which composers are commonly placed. In Germany it is often said: ‘He Norwegianizes!’ [Er norwegert!] It is true that I draw on the Norwegian folk tune, but even Mozart and Beethoven would not have become what they did had they not had the old masters as models. The proud German folk song was a foundation for old masters, and without folk music no art music is possible. I realized this clearly. And then they [the German critics] say: ‘He Norwegianizes!’... I know very well why my music sounds altogether too national to German ears, but I surely must also taken into consideration the fact that a good deal of my individuality is due to my Germanization, for it is not to be found in the Nordic national character. I believe nonetheless that there is a capability in the Norwegian people to grasp this harmony—indeed, that I perhaps lies there hidden in an enigmatic way. As our poets again and again create works based on material from the sagas, so also the composer can and must search out the musical sources for his art” (qtd. Benestad 177)

Not surprisingly, this sentiment is one of the foundational ideas for Bela Bartok's music, and Grieg had a profound impact on several composers of "national music". This next song, "På Skogstien" (Autumn Song) is based on this idea and inspired by Norwegian folk songs.

[Sing: "Autumn Song"]

In the last three to four years of his life, Grieg spent the majority of his time touring Europe. His music was extremely well-received everywhere he went, and on multiple occasions, he was called for several curtain calls. On one particular evening, he had to put on his coat before bowing at yet another curtain call because the audience would not stop clapping and cheering.

In 1905, Grieg began having serious health problems that had originally dated back to a health attack in 1861 during his time in Leipzig. A kind of tuberculosis had collapsed one of his lungs at the time, and at almost 60 years of age, his battered body could not keep up with his busy lifestyle. He lost hope for life several times and wondered which trip would be his last, but his health continued to fluctuate for another two years. During this time, he and Nina signed a will that gave all of his documents and original scores of music to the Bergen Public Library located in the city where Grieg was born.

In June and July of 1907, Grieg's health plummeted. He continued performing concerts but had to be very careful in his traveling, and oftentimes could not leave his bed. On the evening of September 4, Grieg passed away. His ashes were buried at Trolldhaugen in the cliff of the fjord near the place he and Nina had built their home in 1885. Frants Beyer, Grieg's close friend, wrote these words to Nina in 1886 as he deposited Grieg's ashes in the cliff a year after Grieg's death: "Now Edvard's ashes have come to their final resting place. I set the urn in the crypt, and then the stone was placed in front of it. A blackbird was singing in the spruce trees overhead. The sun was just setting behind gold-rimmed clouds, casting its last beams across the water and upon Edvard's name" (qtd. Benestad 196).

Troldhaugen is now a museum for Edvard Grieg. His home, composer's hut, and Steinway piano (an anniversary gift from his wife and his piano of choice) are all located there. A concert hall dedicated to him was also built near the museum.

Throughout his life, Grieg underwent many changes in his style due to his interactions with others. At the beginning, his style was very German, simple, somewhat Romantic, and very similar to Schumann. By the end of his career, his deeply Romantic, expressive style came to represent the essence of Norwegian music.

This last song is one that Nina, his wife, sang often in concerts and social events. Like every other song, it was written for her and perfectly suited her voice. The very opposite of a prima donna, Nina sang to highlight her husband's beautiful artistry and often had her audiences in tears. This song is "Et Håb" (Hope).

[Sing: "Et Håb"]

As a performer, learning about Grieg's relationship with nature, his religious convictions, his commitment to family, and his personal ideals has helped me to understand what true artistry is and how it is attained in performance. The requirements for artistic balance are critical to consider when learning a piece, and each of Grieg's songs challenges the performer to find his own interpretation and style, much like the composer's experiences in stylistic compositional development. Such composition requires mastering the rules, learning from the examples of great musicians, and exploring with imagination. We can take Grieg's life as a great example and hope to gain a portion of the musical understanding he had. We can explore. We can experiment. We can be original. Most of all, we can express ourselves through our music and let our music live through us, just as Grieg did. Thank you for your attendance tonight.

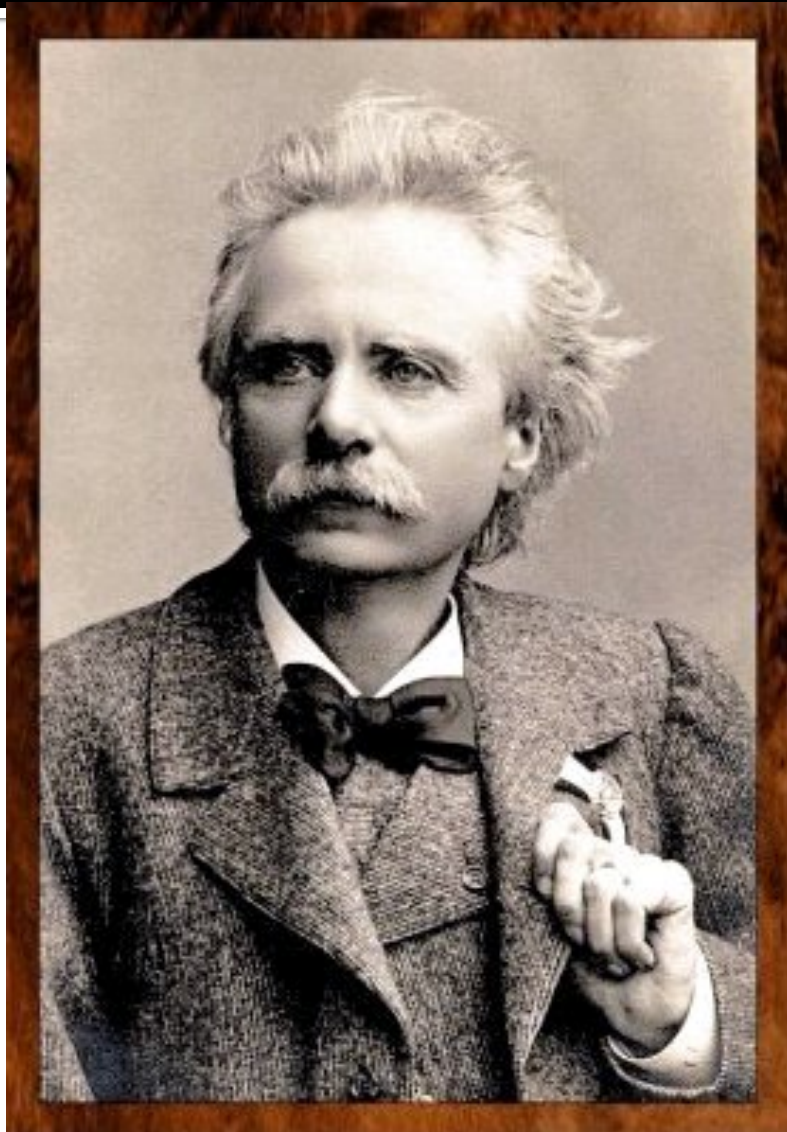
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Leah Kennedy

The Life and Works of Edvard Grieg

Edvard Hagerup Greig (1843-1907)



Early Years

The earliest known
portrait of Grieg



Leipzig Conservatory



The Gewandthaus



Nina Hagerup



Jeg Elsker Dig (I Love Thee)

My thoughts think you are
the only one on earth,
you are my heart's first love.
I love you, as no one here on earth does,
I love you in time and eternity!



Hun er saa vid (She is so white)

She is white, my heart's love,
a more white one there is not;
I love her, it does not happen
that I can love her more!

Now she is dead, my heart's love,
far more white she smiles now!
Now she is dead, oh broken heart!
And more I love her now!

Early Career



God Morgen (Good Morning)

The day is up, joy is lit,
Misery flies, stormed over and burned.
Over the flowing mountains
the day's royal king is now riding.

"Up, up!" birdlings say.
"Up, up!" childish voices say.
My hope comes up with the sun!

Jeg giver mit Digt til Våren (I give my heart to the spring)

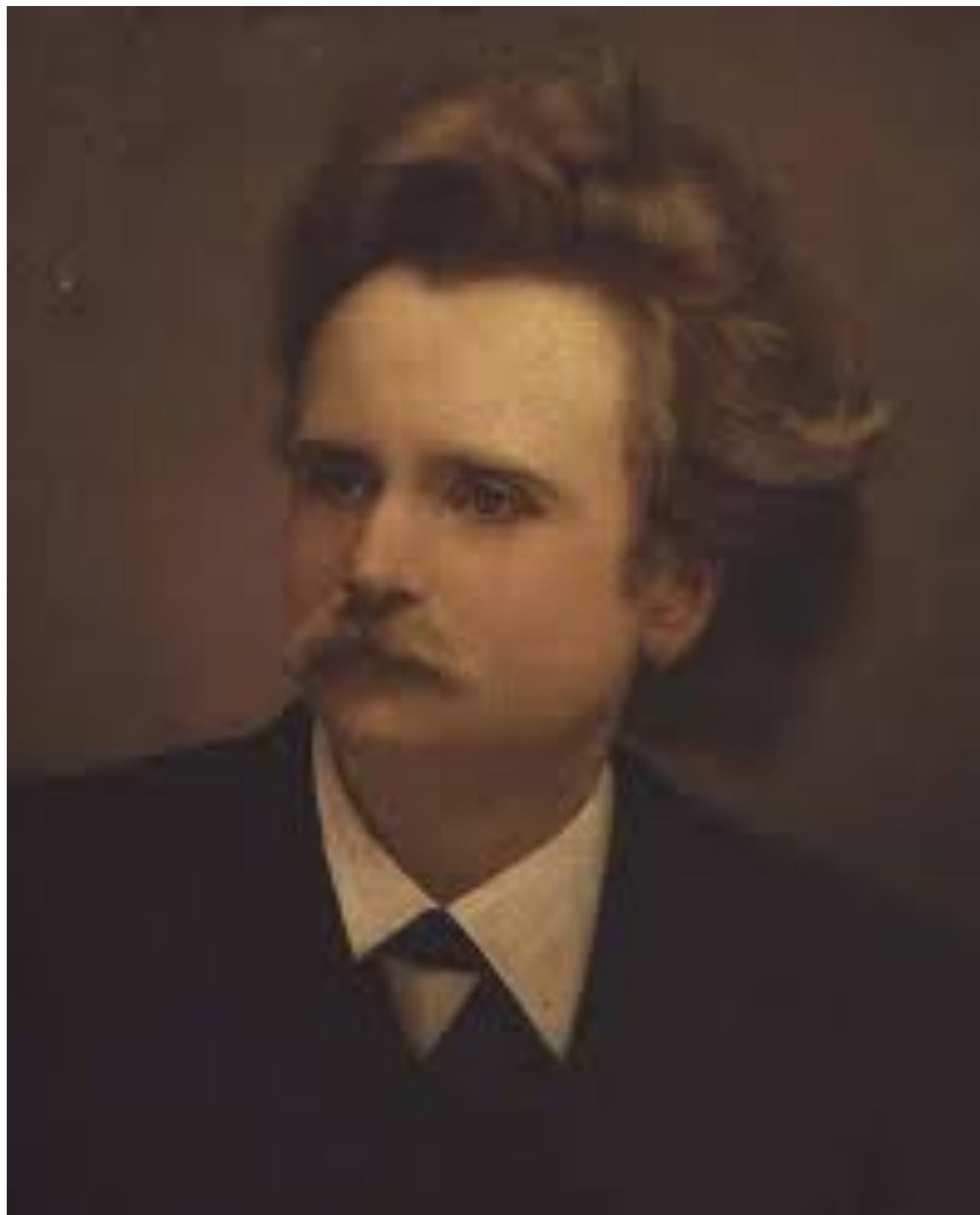
To Springtime my song I utter, that back to us he may flutter,
both laden with fancies sweet, in friendly affection meet.

They smile and the sun is brightened;
old winter is scared and frightened;
to join them the brook comes bubbling,
his spirit the song is troubling,
and, chased from their secret bowers,
light winds bring the breath of flowers.
To Springtime my song I utter!

Tak for dit Råd (Say what you will)

Say what you will but today I will still launch
my boat from this shore
where the wild breakers roar.
Though the journey may take me to death's
yawning door, I must dare now
to do what I've never done before

Please understand,
I do not leave this land as one flies from a foe.
The sea calls: I must go.
Though the jagged rocks lie in waiting for me,
I must know how deep and how wide is the sea!



En Svane (A Swan)

My white swan,
you silent one, you still one,
through neither blow or trill
Is your voice betrayed.

Fearlessly protective of
elves, who went to sleep;
always listening,
gliding always in circles.

But last meeting,
Your guise of beauty
was of secret lies,
yes there, there you sang!

The note was food,
you paved your path.
You sang in death;
you were nevertheless a swan.

Modersorg (Mother's sorrow)

Saw you my little boy
with the bright curly hair?
I saw him long,
But it would never be enough!
Ah so empty, so empty,
so empty now is his small cradle,
while my poor breasts
are continually full of deep sadness.

Mild Jesus, you were fierce
because you took him behind small stars!
Did you need angels?
Ah earth has so few!
Give to him shiny wings
and Heaven's bright pleasure.
Help me as no one has,
oh help me to cry!

“Komposten”





Grieg's Writing Desk





Interior fra Edvard Griegs komponisthytte

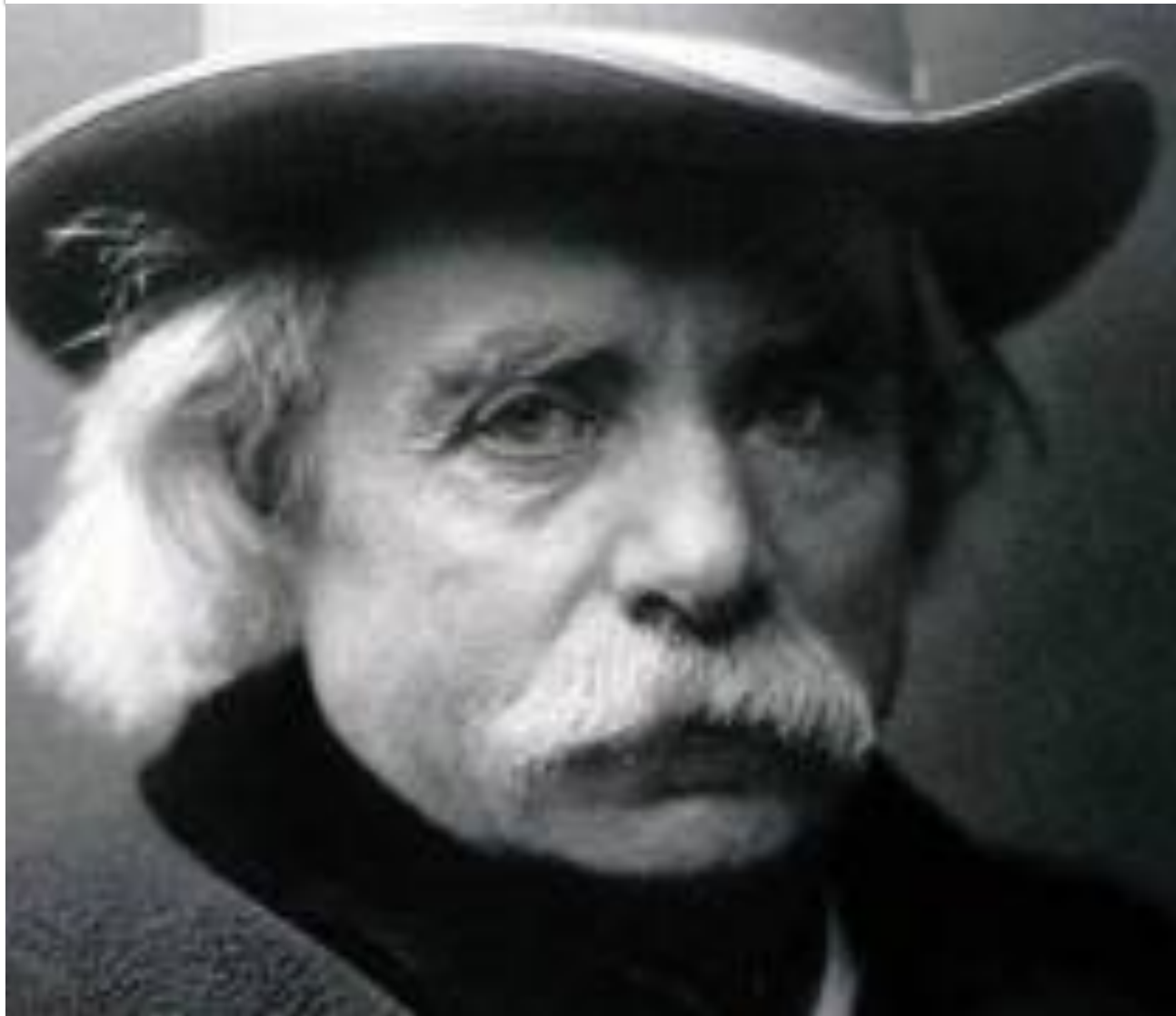
Foto Einar Knudsen



Solveigs Sang (Solveig's song)

The winter may go and the spring disappear,
Next summer, too, may fade, and the whole long year,
But you will be returning, in truth, I know,
And I will wait for you as I promised long ago.

May God guide and keep you wherever you may go,
Upon you His blessing and mercy bestow.
And here I will await you until you are here;
And if you are in Heaven, I'll meet you there.



A later picture
of Grieg

På Skogstien (Autumn song)

Say, do you remember last summer when we
wandered here often?

Each leaf was as green as hope, each wind drag
gentle sunshine.

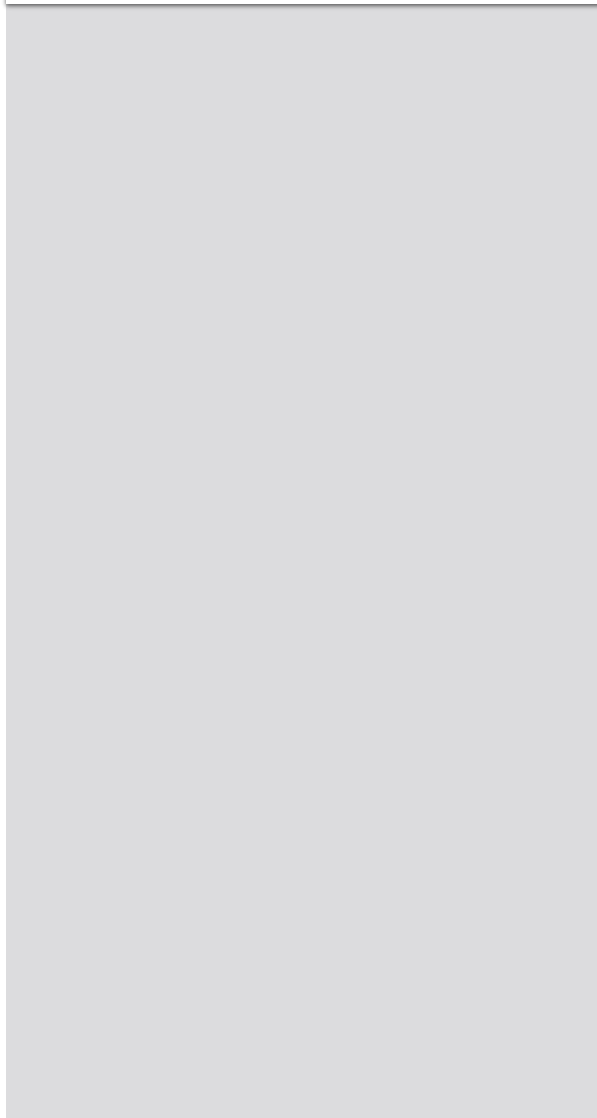
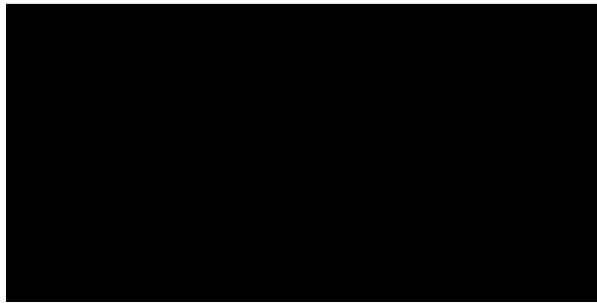
Now the leaves are hurtling across the faded
bloomless Earth,

And the bare branches high in fall's stormy chorus.

Alas, it is just nature, which is wrapped in cold.

But you, my friend, like it, you also have changed.





Troldhaugen





A painting of Grieg and Nina in
their later years (1890's)



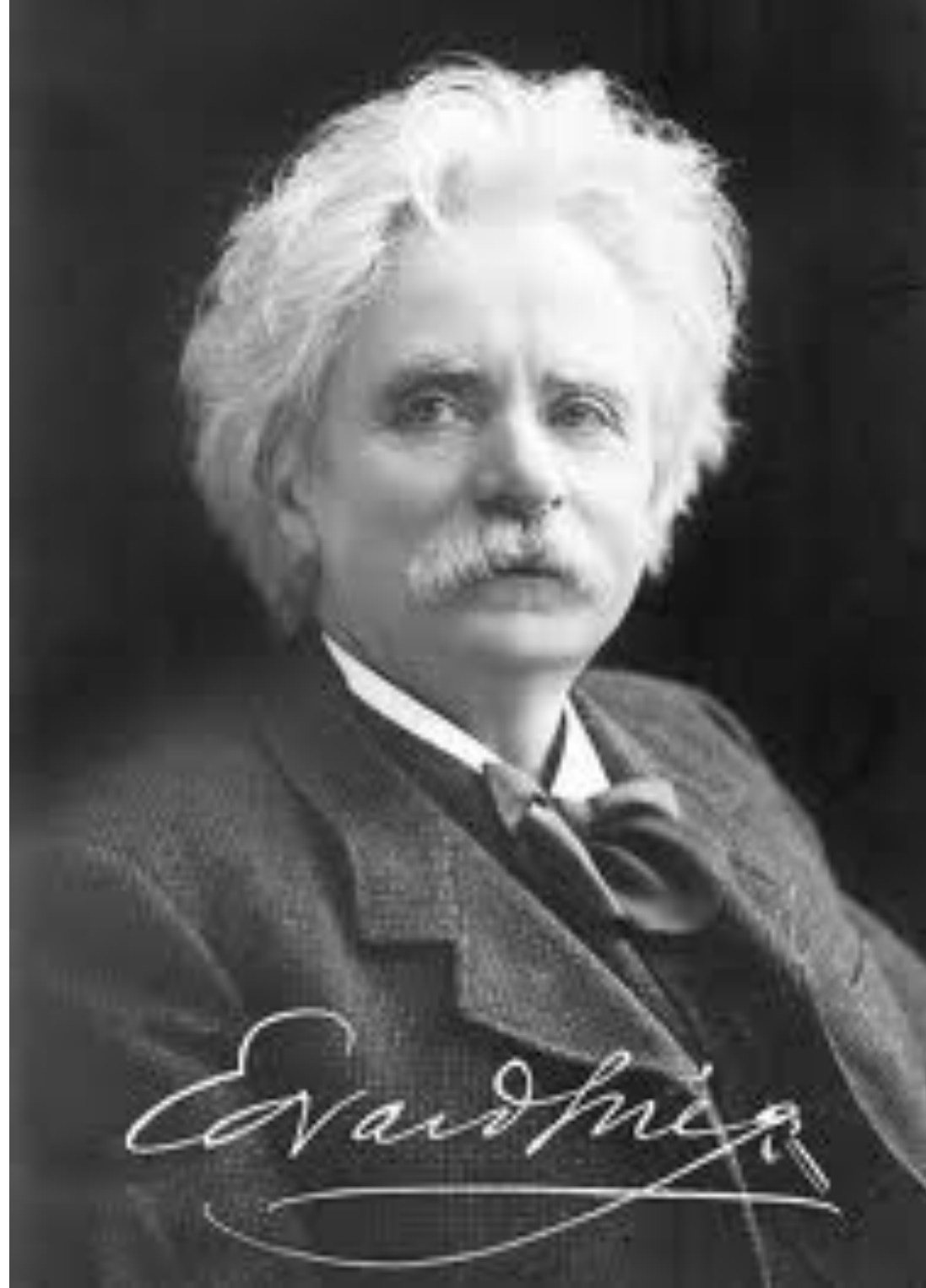
Et Håb (Hope)

I might make a joyful noise for all winds
to let my pleasure out! Would you understand?
No, it is better that I have for safety entered
it here even in my true heart.

In my heart, the beaming, banks in
to the beat, oh, to a happy song!
My head glows by the thoughts of spring: of how
wild and pleasant their time.

In my ear is the roaring, singing
as tones from an angel voice.
With a thousand murmurs, cute tongues,
They tell me, what is living in the future.

Ah! Dare I believe it! I will so.
Where flames hope and shine!
Out from there they are far-flung.



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Author's Biography

Leah Elizabeth Kennedy graduated in 2007 from Lone Peak High School in Highland, Utah. Quickly discovering her love of voice and opera in her senior year, she entered Utah State University that autumn as a music major with an emphasis in Vocal Performance. Her active community and school involvement continued in college as she performed with University Chorale and Chamber Singers, Logan Institute of Religion's Latter-Day Voices, USU Opera Company, and other various ensembles. Her favorite opera role was "Pamina" in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*. She also enjoyed her time as an Honors Undergraduate Teaching Fellow, Honors Student Peer Advisor, and leading developer of the Honors Mentor Program.

After she graduates in May 2011, Leah will continue her education to earn the degree of Master of Music in Voice Performance. She hopes to teach in her own private studio and perform with Houston, San Francisco, and Chicago Lyric Operas.